

Sign pleads for saving Chino Valley Adult School

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Created:

DailyBulletin.com

CHINO - Sindi Wasserman's house in the 4800 block of Lincoln Avenue is complete with a green front lawn, flowers, a white wrought iron fence and a message.

Hanging from the side of her home is a laminated sign that measures 13 feet high and 4 feet wide.

The sign reads "Settle your contracts CSEA and ACT please! Save our Adult School."

In February, Chino Valley Unified School District officials announced a \$20 million budget reduction for the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years. The cuts included "hot-ticket" items such as the elimination of the elementary school music program as well as high school counselors and transportation.

Also on the list: Closing Chino Valley Adult School.

"Everyone is in limbo-land, we don't know what to tell" the students, said Wasserman, a full-time teacher at the adult school.

"I know the board wants us to stay open, but they have to sit back while the unions do their negotiations."

District employees' accepting pay cuts could allow the adult school to return and the other hot-ticket items to be reinstated.

Associated Chino Teacher officials met last week with Chino Valley Unified officials. Union leaders for classified employees - district workers who do not have to hold a teaching credential - will meet Wednesday with district staffers.

The talks also could determine if employees who have received layoff notices would be brought back in the fall. The district has issued 119 layoff notices.

"Anything is possible during negotiations, and, at this point, we are still in negotiations and we have to see what happens," said Denise Arroyo, president of the California School Employees Association, Chapter 102.

Chino Valley Adult School's entire staff has received layoff notices with the exception of Wasserman, Principal Rick Landorf and a bilingual/bi-literate English as a Second Language coordinator.

"The district is optimistic that success at the bargaining table will bring back many of the positions that were cut in February and (is) hopeful that this can be accomplished yet in this fiscal year before June 30," Chino Valley Unified spokeswoman Julie Gobin said.

The adult school at 12970 Third St. in Chino provides citizenship preparation as well as high school, English as a Second Language and General Education Development courses. Wednesday was last day of class for adult school students.

For high school dropout Lucio Carachure, the diploma he hopes to receive from the adult school could determine his future.

Carachure stopped attending Chino High School in his senior year so he could start working and help his mother pay some bills.

The 28-year-old father of two children recently lost his job and worries that he won't be employable without a high school diploma.

"I want to set a good example for my kids," Carachure said. "I have only 15 credits to get my high school diploma, and, when I think about it, I'll be the only person in my family to get one."

This is not the first time the adult school has been on the chopping block. In 2010, the school was set to close, but was resurrected.

Wasserman said she worries that federal grant funding will also be lost if the school closes.

"If we closed in 2010, we would have lost \$480,000, and, if we close this year, we know it will be more than that," she said.

"If the school officially closes then reopens, we'll lose all the money. We'll only be able to keep the money if we stay open."

Either way, this will not be the first school closure for the Chino Valley Unified School District in recent years.

In 2009, the school district was dealing with a massive budget deficit to the tune of \$44 million.

As a result, officials closed Los Serranos Elementary School in Chino Hills and Richard Gird and El Rancho Elementary schools in Chino.

The sign on Wasserman's house faces Monte Vista Avenue and hangs above a bed of red hibiscus flowers.

It was made and colored by the adult school's students.

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